

VZCZCXRO0724
OO RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHJA #2474/01 2500829
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 070829Z SEP 07
FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6119
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS IMMEDIATE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 4286
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 1131
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY PRIORITY 3426
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0759
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY 1725
RUEHHM/AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY PRIORITY 0213
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHHJJPI/USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 002474

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, INR/EAP
NSC FOR EPHU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/06/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [PINR](#) [ID](#)
SUBJECT: EYES ON THE PRIZE? THE SULTAN AND HIS POLITICAL
AMBITIONS

REF: JAKARTA 2329

JAKARTA 00002474 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph Legend Novak for reasons 1.4(b,d).

Summary
=====

11. (C) When Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono X announced earlier this year that he would resign as Yogyakarta's governor in 2008, he triggered a flurry of speculation about his political plans. Many observers interpreted the Sultan's announcement as a signal that he intended to pursue either the presidency or vice-presidency come the 2009 elections. The Sultan is considered moderate and is generally friendly toward the U.S. Bio notes are contained in para 11. End Summary.

Movin' on Up?
=====

12. (C) With less than two years remaining until the 2009 presidential election, no obvious challengers have emerged with the potential to unseat President Yudhoyono. The paucity of credible presidential candidates at this early stage has prompted many to consider possible dark horse candidates, and virtually everyone's short list of political personalities includes Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono X, the Governor and Sultan of Yogyakarta province.

13. (C) As reported in reftel, Sultan Hamengkubuwono will step aside as the Governor of the Special Regional Province of Yogyakarta next year. According to Embassy contacts in Jakarta, he will depart office with three attributes that could help get a presidential run off the ground: national name recognition, strong Javanese roots, and a reputation (though contested) as a steady and effective leader of Yogyakarta, the country's unofficial capital for culture and higher education. While most Indonesians are probably not familiar with the Sultan's management of the province's internal affairs, the Sultan is covered by print and broadcast media nationally and enjoys a certain cachet that comes with his royal status.

Sultan on Sultan =====

14. (C) For his part, the Sultan told Poloff on August 16 in a meeting in Yogyakarta that he would only consider a run for national office "if the people want it." The Sultan spoke of his father's instruction to him to always keep "the people's" needs paramount. According to the Sultan, "my ambitions are those of the people; if they need me, they will find me, but I am not going to ask them for support." (Note: The Sultan's father, the late Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono IX, served a term as the country's vice president. He died in 1989.)

15. (C) Addressing a question about his plans for after he steps down as governor, the Sultan said he would work on finding ways to address Indonesia's many problems. He believed he could assist the country by leveraging Indonesia's cultural resources creatively, and he said he planned on coordinating his activities across the party spectrum. He would not publicly announce any of his plans, however, because he did not want to create the impression that he was seeking higher office.

Making a Case =====

16. (C) Roy Janis, founder of the Democratic Renewal Party (PDP), recently waxed enthusiastic about the Sultan's political upside during a meeting with Poloff in Jakarta. Roy said the Sultan possessed both the means and the motivation to take on the President. While Roy noted that the Sultan typically came in fifth place in hypothetical presidential polling, he believed that the Sultan could easily climb up the list with even a token attempt at a

JAKARTA 00002474 002.2 OF 002

campaign.

17. (C) Umar Juoro, a former staffer for President Habibie, agreed with the bulk of Roy's analysis, though he emphasized that he did not think the Sultan would actually run for president. Umar said the most likely scenario would involve the Sultan running as a vice presidential candidate with current VP Kalla if the latter were to run for president. The Sultan's unimpeachable Javanese credentials would make him the ideal running mate for Kalla, who most people believe would be handicapped in any presidential run by the fact that he is not from Java, the most populous area in Indonesia. (Note: The VP is from Sulawesi.)

There are Critics =====

18. (C) During a recent trip to Yogyakarta, Poloff encountered a surprising degree of skepticism about the Sultan's possible national aspirations. According to Gadjah Mada University political science Professor Cornelius Lay, the Sultan clearly had designs on the presidency or the vice-presidency, but his support in Yogyakarta itself had dropped off in the last few years. Yogyakartaans had not been impressed with his record and Lay doubted whether he would be able to charm voters nationally.

19. (C) Former People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) Speaker Amien Rais was also dismissive of the Sultan's national prospects. Rais, who currently keeps an office at Gadjah Mada University, told Poloff that the Sultan "was not his dad," saying that the Sultan lacked his father's charisma and charm, before adding that the Sultan "had no talent." Rais related to Poloff a story that he believed to be a barometer of the Sultan's popularity in Yogyakarta. According to Rais, last December the Sultan announced that he would hold an unspecified religious ceremony. Rais drove to the site on the day of the event and was shocked when only 200 people

showed up. Rais told Poloff the event clearly illustrated for him that the Sultan had been reduced to a political afterthought in Yogyakarta.

It's Still Early

=====

¶10. (C) With well over a year to go before the presidential campaign begins, the Sultan--despite the critics--appears to be one of a select few with the potential to challenge the president. Yudhoyono's poll numbers are generally positive and the Sultan, even with his strong name recognition, would appear to be a long-shot at this point. That said, he is a serious political player. On policy issues, he is a moderate and considered generally friendly toward the U.S.

Bio Notes

=====

¶11. (C) Mission has the following bio notes on the Sultan:

Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono X: Born March 2, 1946---graduated from the Law Faculty at Gadjah Mada University---served as a member of the MPR starting in 1992---served as Governor of Yogyakarta from 1998 - present---does not speak much English---is a heavy chain smoker---is married to Gusti Kanjeng Ratu, a member of the DPD, and has five children---is the son of Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono IX, a former Vice President under Suharto who passed away in Boston in 1989 and was flown back to Indonesia on Air Force II.

HUME